

LIVABLE MECK

2021 PROGRESS REPORT

PARTNERSHIP IS POWERFUL

INCREDIBLE STORIES OF COLLABORATION!

CHARLOTTE | CORNELIUS | DAVIDSON | HUNTERSVILLE | MATTHEWS | MINT HILL | PINEVILLE

PARTNERSHIP IS POWERFUL

LIVABLE MECK IS AN ENGAGEMENT INFRASTRUCTURE BRINGING PARTNERS TOGETHER TO ENHANCE THE QUALITY OF LIFE ACROSS OUR COMMUNITY. LIVABLE MECK'S PURPOSE IS TO COORDINATE, SUPPORT AND ENACT POSITIVE CHANGE BY:

- ENGAGING RESIDENTS AND STAKEHOLDERS IN A PROCESS TO GUIDE COMMUNITY GROWTH;
- FACILITATING COLLABORATION AMONG THE COMMUNITY'S PRIVATE, NONPROFIT AND GOVERNMENT ORGANIZATIONS;
- MEASURING THE LIVABILITY OF MECKLENBURG COUNTY'S COMMUNITIES; AND
- COMMUNICATING STORIES AND PROGRESS TO INSPIRE.

IN 2021, LIVABLE MECK ADOPTED NEW WAYS TO BE A COMMUNITY CONVENER AND DEMONSTRATE THE PHILOSOPHY OF "BETTER...TOGETHER." LIVABLE MECK EMBRACED CREATIVE METHODS FOR COLLABORATION AND SERVING PARTNERS. OUR PARTNERS DEMONSTRATED THAT POWERFUL RESULTS COME FROM FIDELITY TO THE **GUIDING PRINCIPLES** OF HEALTHY, AFFORDABLE, SECURE, ACCESSIBLE, EDUCATED, INNOVATIVE, ENJOYABLE AND TOGETHER.

WE ARE PLEASED TO PRESENT THE 2021 LIVABLE MECK PROGRESS REPORT TO THE COMMUNITY. WE HOPE THIS REPORT WILL PROVIDE READERS WITH OPTIMISM AND ENERGY TO FACE THE FUTURE.

PARTNERS

LIVABLE MECK PARTNERS ARE ORGANIZATIONS THAT AGREE TO SUPPORT THE COMMUNITY PLAN AND PROTECT THE QUALITY OF LIFE IN OUR COMMUNITY. PARTNERS SHARE THEIR TALENTS, WISDOM AND ENERGY IN COLLABORATIVE EFFORTS AND WITHIN THEIR OWN BUSINESS MODELS. PARTNERS ARE ASKED TO ACTIVELY ENGAGE WITH LIVABLE MECK BY ATTENDING EVENTS, SHARING EXPERIENCES AND INVITING OTHERS TO BECOME PARTNERS.

VISIT LIVABLEMECK.COM TO LEARN MORE AND GET INVOLVED.

EVOLUTION

IN 2012, THE CITY OF CHARLOTTE, FOUNDATION FOR THE CAROLINAS AND MECKLENBURG COUNTY COLLABORATED TO CONSIDER GROWTH PROJECTIONS AND QUALITY OF LIFE CONCERNs. THIS EFFORT WAS CALLED THE **MECKLENBURG LIVABLE COMMUNITIES PLAN**. AT THAT TIME, ONE MILLION MORE RESIDENTS WERE ANTICIPATED IN THE METROPOLITAN STATISTICAL AREA (MSA) BY 2050. IN JUST A FEW YEARS, THAT EXPECTATION HAS ACCELERATED, AND WE NOW ANTICIPATE ONE MILLION MORE RESIDENTS IN THE NEXT TEN YEARS.

THE GOAL OF LIVABLE MECK IS TO LEVERAGE RESOURCES AND KNIT TOGETHER TALENTS TO MEET THE CHALLENGING DEMANDS OF THIS GROWTH AND PROTECT THE QUALITY OF LIFE FOR ALL MECKLENBURG COUNTY RESIDENTS.

THE LIVABLE MECK GUIDING PRINCIPLES, AND THEIR ASSOCIATED STRATEGIES, SERVE AS A COLLECTIVE ROAD MAP TO ENSURE OUR COMMUNITY'S STRENGTHS, DOMINATE THE STORY OF OUR REMARKABLE GROWTH AND SUSTAIN US IN THE FUTURE.

REPORT

THIS REPORT HIGHLIGHTS GOOD NEWS FROM OUR COMMUNITY AND PARTNERS' SUCCESS STORIES THAT EXEMPLIFY THE PLAN'S **EIGHT GUIDING PRINCIPLES**.

OUR COMMUNITY WILL BE...

HEALTHY

PAGE 6

EDUCATED

PAGE 22

AFFORDABLE

PAGE 12

INNOVATIVE

PAGE 26

SECURE

PAGE 14

ENJOYABLE

PAGE 28

ACCESSIBLE

PAGE 20

TOGETHER

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TIMELINE

2012

EFFORT BEGINS; COMMUNITY STAKEHOLDERS ENGAGED

2013

FEASIBILITY STUDY COMPLETED

2014

COMMUNITY VISION AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES ADOPTED

2015

THINK TANK MEETINGS OCCURRED; LIVABLE MECK IS REBRANDED AND PARTNER INITIATIVES INVENTORY UPDATED

2017

NEW BUSINESS MODEL LAUNCHED AND STEERING COMMITTEE EXPANDED

2018

"VOICE OF THE COMMUNITY" BEGINS PARTNER-BASED RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

2019

"VOICE OF THE COMMUNITY" CONCLUDES AND A NEW PLAN PUBLISHED

2020

OPERATIONS ADJUSTED GIVEN COVID-19 HEALTH RESTRICTIONS AND THE CHANGING NEEDS OF PARTNERS

2021

EMBRACED CREATIVE METHODS FOR COLLABORATION

HEALTHY	AFFORDABLE	SECURE	ACCESSIBLE
AREA OF FOCUS			
STRATEGIES			
BUILD A HEALTHIER COMMUNITY BY PROMOTING PHYSICAL AND MENTAL WELL-BEING AND A HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT.	ENCOURAGE OPTIONS THAT PROMOTE AFFORDABILITY AND PROXIMITY TO WORK AND LEISURE.	STRIVE TO ENHANCE SAFETY AND CREATE A MORE PREPARED COMMUNITY THAT CAN EASILY RECOVER FROM NATURAL DISASTERS, SIGNIFICANT EVENTS OR EMERGENCIES.	FACILITATE AND ENHANCE EQUITABLE ACCESS TO PUBLIC AMENITIES, SERVICES AND INFORMATION.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION • NUTRITION • WELLNESS 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AGING-IN-PLACE • CHILDCARE • HEALTHCARE • HOUSING • JOBS 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ECONOMIC RESILIENCE • EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS • INFRASTRUCTURE • PUBLIC SAFETY 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION • ROADS/PATHWAYS • INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY
<p>INCREASE ACCESS TO AND INFORMATION ABOUT HEALTHY LIFESTYLE CHOICES, HEALTHCARE AND MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES.</p> <p>INCREASE ACCESS TO HEALTHY FOODS.</p> <p>PROTECT AND EXPAND GREEN SPACE AND RECREATIONAL AMENITIES.</p> <p>PROTECT AND RESTORE THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT.</p>	<p>ENCOURAGE AFFORDABLE OPTIONS FOR HEALTHCARE AND DISEASE PREVENTION.</p> <p>EXPAND THE AVAILABILITY OF AFFORDABLE RECREATION AND CULTURAL PROGRAMS.</p> <p>ENCOURAGE AFFORDABLE HOUSING OPTIONS (INCLUDING PURCHASING OR RENTALS).</p>	<p>PREPARE FOR NATURAL DISASTERS, ECONOMIC SHIFTS OR SIGNIFICANT EVENTS.</p> <p>PLAN FOR THE FUTURE AND POPULATION GROWTH.</p> <p>ADDRESS THE CONDITIONS THAT GIVE RISE TO PUBLIC SAFETY CONCERNs.</p> <p>STRENGTHEN RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN RESIDENTS AND PUBLIC SAFETY SERVICE PROVIDERS.</p>	<p>IMPROVE PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION SERVICES TO IMPROVE PHYSICAL AND ECONOMIC MOBILITY ACROSS AND WITHIN THE COMMUNITY.</p> <p>BE ACCESSIBLE TO ALL GENERATIONS AND ABILITIES.</p> <p>SUPPORT EASE OF NAVIGATING THE COMMUNITY - WALKING, BIKING AND DRIVING.</p> <p>INCREASE ACCESS TO WI-FI AND TECHNOLOGY.</p> <p>IMPROVE UNDERSTANDING OF PUBLIC SERVICES AND HOW TO EFFECTIVELY ACCESS THEM.</p>

THE FIRST FOUR GUIDING PRINCIPLES: **HEALTHY, AFFORDABLE, SECURE** AND **ACCESSIBLE** DESCRIBE THE ENVIRONMENT DESIRED.

EDUCATED	INNOVATIVE	ENJOYABLE	TOGETHER
DESCRIPTION	AREA OF FOCUS		STRATEGIES
<p>STRENGTHEN EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES, PROGRAMS AND SYSTEMS TO UNLEASH INDIVIDUAL POTENTIAL, CLOSE ACHIEVEMENT GAPS AND ENHANCE TALENT READINESS.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SKILLED WORKFORCE • ARTS & CULTURE <p>FOSTER A CULTURE OF LIFE-LONG LEARNING.</p> <p>INCREASE ACCESS TO ARTS, SCIENCE AND HISTORY EDUCATION.</p> <p>EXPAND AND ENHANCE LEARNING ACROSS ALL AGE GROUPS.</p> <p>DEVELOP COMMUNITY LEADERS FOR THE FUTURE.</p>	<p>LEVERAGE DIVERSITY OF THOUGHT, IDEAS, TALENTS, ABILITIES AND RESOURCES TO CREATE A THRIVING COMMUNITY.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CREATIVITY • TECHNOLOGY • ENTREPRENEURSHIP <p>SUPPORT NEW TECHNOLOGY SOLUTIONS.</p> <p>MAKE IT EASIER FOR NEW BUSINESSES TO SUCCEED AND EXISTING BUSINESSES TO FLOURISH.</p> <p>MANAGE THE REGULATORY ENVIRONMENT TO REVITALIZE COMMUNITY CHARACTER AND PRESERVE THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT WHILE ALLOWING FOR GROWTH AND INNOVATION.</p>	<p>ENHANCE THE COMMUNITY THROUGH EXPERIENCES.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ENTERTAINMENT • DESTINATIONS • FESTIVALS & EVENTS • SPORTS & LEISURE <p>EXPAND OPTIONS (INDOOR AND OUTDOOR) TO PARTICIPATE IN THE ARTS, RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES, SPORTS, PARKS AND CULTURAL EVENTS.</p> <p>WELCOME AND PROMOTE CULTURALLY DIVERSE CULINARY ARTS.</p> <p>ENCOURAGE OPPORTUNITIES FOR RESIDENTS TO BE ENTERTAINED.</p> <p>ENCOURAGE DESTINATION RECREATION OPPORTUNITIES.</p>	<p>BUILD LASTING CONNECTIONS AND RELATIONSHIPS THAT CHARACTERIZE A WELCOMING, CONNECTED AND VALUED COMMUNITY.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HOSPITALITY • DIVERSITY • SOCIAL CAPITAL <p>WELCOME NEW PEOPLE, IDEAS AND OPPORTUNITIES.</p> <p>BRING PEOPLE TOGETHER VIA INFORMATION AND EVENTS.</p> <p>CREATE AN ENVIRONMENT SAFE FOR DIVERSITY OF THOUGHT AND CREATIVE CONFLICT.</p> <p>CELEBRATE AND INTEGRATE HISTORY, CULTURE AND DIVERSITY.</p>

THE NEXT THREE PRINCIPLES: **EDUCATED, INNOVATIVE** AND **ENJOYABLE** DESCRIBE WHAT WE'LL DO IN OUR ENVIRONMENT. THE FINAL PRINCIPLE: **TOGETHER** DESCRIBES HOW WE WANT TO BE WITH EACH OTHER.

GUIDING PRINCIPLE

HEALTHY

BUILD A HEALTHIER
COMMUNITY BY PROMOTING
PHYSICAL AND MENTAL
WELLBEING AND A HEALTHY
ENVIRONMENT.

AREA OF FOCUS:

- ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION
- NUTRITION
- WELLNESS

SCAN THIS CODE TO
WATCH THE VIDEO!



STRATEGIES

- INCREASE ACCESS TO AND INFORMATION ABOUT HEALTHY LIFESTYLE CHOICES, HEALTHCARE AND MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES.
- INCREASE ACCESS TO HEALTHY FOODS.
- PROTECT AND EXPAND GREEN SPACE AND RECREATIONAL AMENITIES.
- PROTECT AND RESTORE THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT.



Dilworth's Share the Shade fundraiser

Dilworth Community Association

A 2019 TreesCharlotte report noted the city's tree canopy is under threat, and the city lost 8 percent of its canopy from 2012 to 2018, with trends pointing toward continued decline. According to TreesCharlotte's "Tree Canopy Change Assessment," "a healthy and robust tree canopy is crucial to the sustainability and livability of our communities."

The Dilworth neighborhood in particular has been losing its majestic tree canopy at an alarming rate, due to development, storms and the death of old trees. The Dilworth Community Association (DCA), an all-volunteer group of neighbors who work together to serve the historic and community interests of Dilworth, organized a fundraising effort to add more trees to their streets.

The "Share the Shade" fundraiser, now in its third year, has raised money to add almost 100 new shade trees to the Dilworth neighborhood. In addition, a portion of funds raised has helped to support the tree canopy of neighbors living in the nearby Revolution Park neighborhood with their tree maintenance lottery. Neighbors

in the Revolution Park neighborhood apply for funds for their tree issues. The applications are reviewed and prioritized based on income and need and the selected recipients were notified in early 2022.

Thanks to the effort of so many supporting Charlotte trees – Dilworth neighbors, the City of Charlotte's Landscape Management arborists, and TreesCharlotte – the natural environment is being preserved and protected.



GUIDING PRINCIPLE

HEALTHY

BUILD A HEALTHIER
COMMUNITY BY PROMOTING
PHYSICAL AND MENTAL
WELLBEING AND A HEALTHY
ENVIRONMENT.

AREA OF FOCUS:

- ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION
- NUTRITION
- WELLNESS

SCAN THIS CODE TO
WATCH THE VIDEO!



SOUTHMINSTER



STRATEGIES

- INCREASE ACCESS TO AND INFORMATION ABOUT HEALTHY LIFESTYLE CHOICES, HEALTHCARE AND MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES.
- INCREASE ACCESS TO HEALTHY FOODS.
- PROTECT AND EXPAND GREEN SPACE AND RECREATIONAL AMENITIES.
- PROTECT AND RESTORE THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT.



Southminster forms partnerships for caregiving support program

Southminster

Recent data, including the 2020 report by the National Alliance for Caregiving and the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP), shows that 1 in 5 Americans (21.3 percent) are caregivers, totaling an estimated 53 million adults in the U.S. Despite the prevalence of caregiving duties, access to affordable and coordinated services remains scarce, and has been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

To better support caregivers, senior living and continuing care retirement community, Southminster, partnered with The University of North Carolina at Charlotte (UNC Charlotte), Stanford University and several professional community volunteers to bring an evidence-based caregiver support program to our community in a free, virtual setting.

Entitled "Caregiver Thrive, Learn, Connect" (Caregiver TLC), the program consists of six, two-hour virtual workshops led by trained facilitators who teach coping skills to help family caregivers deal with stress, depression and burden, adopting strategies to improve their quality of life while they care for others.

"We view this investment of our charitable resources as an effective way to create solutions to support caregivers, which we know will ultimately improve not only their well-being but the lives of those they are caring for," said Ben Gilchrist, Southminster President and CEO.

The Southminster-supported program is coordinated by a research team at UNC Charlotte led by Dr. Julian Montoro-Rodriguez, Professor of Social Work and Sociology, who has conducted research for the past 20 years in the fields of aging, health, human development and family studies. The team developed this new online program with Dr. Dolores Gallagher-Thompson, Stanford University School of Medicine Research Professor Emerita and former director of the Stanford Geriatric Education Center. Along with associates, she has conducted dementia caregiving research for 25 years.

"When you're focused on caregiving for a relative, partner, friend or neighbor, it's easy to run out of gas, get down on yourself and question your caregiving skills," said Dr. Gallagher-

GUIDING PRINCIPLE HEALTHY

BUILD A HEALTHIER COMMUNITY BY PROMOTING PHYSICAL AND MENTAL WELLBEING AND A HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT.

AREA OF FOCUS:

- ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION
- NUTRITION
- WELLNESS

Southminster (cont'd.)

Thompson. "Knowing how to schedule and commit to daily activities that are positive and uplifting for you is the best way to 'refill your tank.' None of us can run on an empty tank for long. It's crucial to prioritize self-care and self-compassion."

Dr. Gallagher-Thompson and her team developed many iterations of caregiver training starting in the 1990s, using randomized controlled trials to determine what kind of training was most effective to minimize depression, maximize the quality of life, and renew a caregiver's sense of meaning and purpose. Face-to-face workshops proved most

effective, but when COVID-19 changed the world, the training went virtual.

"It's been heartening and encouraging that offering our workshops on Zoom has been so effective," said Dr. Gallagher-Thompson. "People like it, and it is well-received, especially since you don't have to leave home to interact with and learn from our facilitators and take part in small group discussions with other caregivers."

Participants who registered for the Caregiver TLC Zoom workshops received a guide detailing the topic to be covered in each of the six workshops: **Strategies for Success, Dealing with the Blues, Bouncing Back, Self-Care: Filling the Well, Coping with Frustration and All by Myself**. A personalized Atlas of Caregiving CareMap is invaluable for participants, as is the program's "Continuing Conversations" series, and its dedication to fostering resilience by promoting Virtual Communities of caregivers eager to help each other.

"Whether you're a caregiver yourself or your facility or organization provides services for caregivers, the Caregiving TLC Program is a free tool that adds another layer of support you can use and share with others," said Dr. Montoro-Rodriguez.

STRATEGIES

- INCREASE ACCESS TO AND INFORMATION ABOUT HEALTHY LIFESTYLE CHOICES, HEALTHCARE AND MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES.
- INCREASE ACCESS TO HEALTHY FOODS.
- PROTECT AND EXPAND GREEN SPACE AND RECREATIONAL AMENITIES.
- PROTECT AND RESTORE THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT.



Workshop facilitator C. Angela Burrow (CDP, CADDCT, CMDCP, RN-UK, and SCM-UK) of Burrow Dementia Training has practice experience in gerontology, long-term care, acute medicine, rehabilitation and instruction.

"As a facilitator for the Caregiver TLC program, I see myself as sharing my experience and expertise I've developed in some parallel work I do with the Alzheimer's Association, relying on my listening skills and sensitivity to deliver the program as the developers intended," said Burrow. "Especially gratifying for me is being able to create opportunities for participants to cultivate trust as they bond with me and each other. When I hear people sharing their phone numbers during the workshops, it's music to my ears. I know they've built friendships with others in similar situations, gained confidence and taken comfort in knowing they are not alone."

Helene Cox and her sister Melissa Van Noppen, who are caregivers for their mother, completed the Zoom sessions Burrow facilitated in September. "The most valuable part of the program for me was the unique CareMap we learned to use," said Cox. "It helped me see where our family had holes in our caregiving support and exactly who might be best to help us fill specific holes, such as identifying friends

from church who could provide rides to church events. I also frequently rely on the breathing exercises and visualization we learned in one of the workshops to relieve stress."

"When I first heard about the Caregiver TLC program, I thought it was just another program about how to be a better caregiver to my loved one," Cox added. "It was so great to find out that it was really about learning strategies to help me be better to myself."

"Current research tells us that caregiving responsibilities occur across all generations, racial and ethnic groups, income and education levels, family types and sexual orientations. We need to make this program accessible to as many caregivers as possible," said Tracy McGinnis, Director of Philanthropy for Southminster. "Based on what we learn in working with our colleagues, we hope to make this a principal community program long-term."

The need for programs like Caregiver TLC is unprecedented. The free Caregiver TLC program is open to caregivers in North Carolina as well as other states and countries. Find out more and register to take part in a six-week online workshop in 2022 at www.caregivertlc.org/about_CTLT.html.

GUIDING PRINCIPLE

AFFORDABLE

ENCOURAGE OPTIONS THAT
PROMOTE AFFORDABILITY
AND PROXIMITY TO WORK
AND LEISURE.

AREA OF FOCUS:

- AGING-IN-PLACE
- CHILDCARE
- HEALTHCARE
- HOUSING
- JOBS

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 VETERANS
BRIDGE HOME



STRATEGIES

- ENCOURAGE AFFORDABLE OPTIONS FOR HEALTHCARE AND DISEASE PREVENTION.
- EXPAND THE AVAILABILITY OF AFFORDABLE RECREATION AND CULTURAL PROGRAMS.
- ENCOURAGE AFFORDABLE HOUSING OPTIONS (INCLUDING PURCHASING OR RENTALS).

VETERANS BRIDGE HOME

Connecting Veterans and their families to their communities

Veterans Bridge Home

Veterans Bridge Home (VBH) is committed to connecting veterans and their families, in any state of transition, to their communities. Leveraging its network of partners, VBH helps veterans navigate employment, create social connections and settle their families to help enable them to be successful and thriving leaders in the community.

The need for these services continues to grow, and in January 2021, at the request of the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services, VBH assumed responsibility for veterans care coordination in the North Carolina Triad, Triangle and Sandhills regions. These new markets increased the number of counties served from 19 to 49 and include a total veteran population of over 450,000. This expanded mission has more than doubled the previous geographic reach and tripled the overall population to serve.

To meet the needs of this increased population and geography, VBH grew its team from 15 to 21 people. From program data and firsthand experiences, VBH understands that delivering holistic care for veterans and their families can only be

done at the local level, as veterans in different communities have different needs. Therefore, it's imperative for VBH to have teammates who are part of these communities to best serve veteran families across its expanded geography.

"The number of Veteran and Military families VBH connects and serves continues to grow each year, highlighting the need in our community," said Steven Cole, VBH VP of Advancement. "With VBH, veterans in transition have a single point of contact to help navigate this very important life event, in a compassionate, low-pressure and productive manner. Our work has made Charlotte a national model of public-private partnerships in transitioning our nation's returning heroes. This growth is further validation of our model of care for veteran families in the Carolinas."

With Livable Meck's continued support, VBH will continue to grow in order to provide the highest standards of care to an even greater number of families as well as encourage options that promote affordability and proximity to work and leisure.

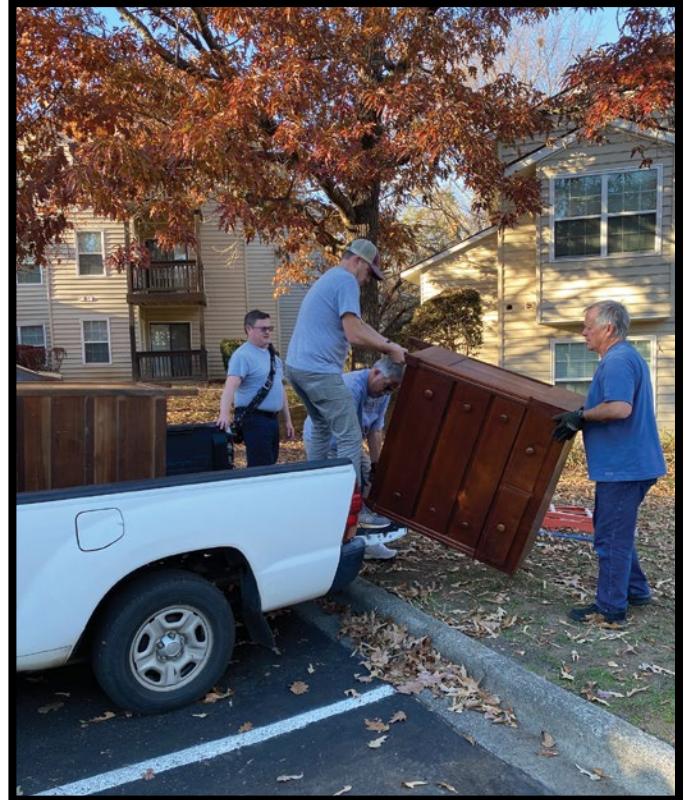
GUIDING PRINCIPLE **SECURE**

STRIVE TO ENHANCE SAFETY AND CREATE A MORE PREPARED COMMUNITY THAT CAN EASILY RECOVER FROM NATURAL DISASTERS, SIGNIFICANT EVENTS OR EMERGENCIES.

AREA OF FOCUS:

- ECONOMIC RESILIENCE
- EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS
- INFRASTRUCTURE
- PUBLIC SAFETY

PINEVILLE NEIGHBORS PLACE



STRATEGIES

- PREPARE FOR NATURAL DISASTERS, ECONOMIC SHIFTS OR SIGNIFICANT EVENTS.
- PLAN FOR THE FUTURE AND POPULATION GROWTH.
- ADDRESS THE CONDITIONS THAT GIVE RISE TO PUBLIC SAFETY CONCERNS.
- STRENGTHEN RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN RESIDENTS AND PUBLIC SAFETY SERVICE PROVIDERS.



Shared love for the Pineville community

Pineville Neighbors Place & Others

Around midnight on Monday, November 15, 2021, a fire started in an apartment building in Pineville. The neighbors responded immediately by knocking on doors to wake up residents and get them out. Due to the neighbors' quick actions, no human life was lost, and no injuries were sustained. However, the building was destroyed, and residents were not able to retrieve any of their belongings. Fourteen households were displaced, and people's lives were turned upside down.

Within two days, the Pineville Fire Department, Pineville Police Department, Atrium Health Pineville and Pineville Neighbors Place met to discuss how to best leverage resources to help neighbors in need. The partners met with those affected to offer help and listen to residents' immediate needs.

People were in shock and devastated. One woman was 80 years old, and her husband had recently died. She told partners how she now had nothing left of him. Another woman operated her business out of her home and lost her computer and records. Still another resident had suffered the loss of her mother months before and lost her cat in the fire.

The partners helped the fire victims in a variety of ways. Pineville Neighbors Place (PNP) sorted donated clothes by size so that residents could easily find clothes that fit. In addition, PNP received food donations and distributed Thanksgiving dinners, so those fire victims could celebrate the holiday. The partnering organizations set up an assistance fund that has raised over \$10,000 which is being paid out to the households. Two area churches, Harrison United Methodist Church and Matthews United Methodist Church, offered furniture from their furniture ministries to help furnish residents' new homes. The Pineville firemen helped volunteers deliver this furniture and put it in place. One volunteer donated and set up a crib for a mother-to-be who was 34 weeks pregnant. Jewish Family Services, in collaboration with Pineville Neighbors Place, offered mental health care to those who have been traumatized.

This collaboration is a true testimony to the shared love of the Pineville community. Partners worked together to help residents recover from this emergency and strengthen relationships between residents and service providers.

GUIDING PRINCIPLE **SECURE**

STRIVE TO ENHANCE SAFETY AND CREATE A MORE PREPARED COMMUNITY THAT CAN EASILY RECOVER FROM NATURAL DISASTERS, SIGNIFICANT EVENTS OR EMERGENCIES.

AREA OF FOCUS:

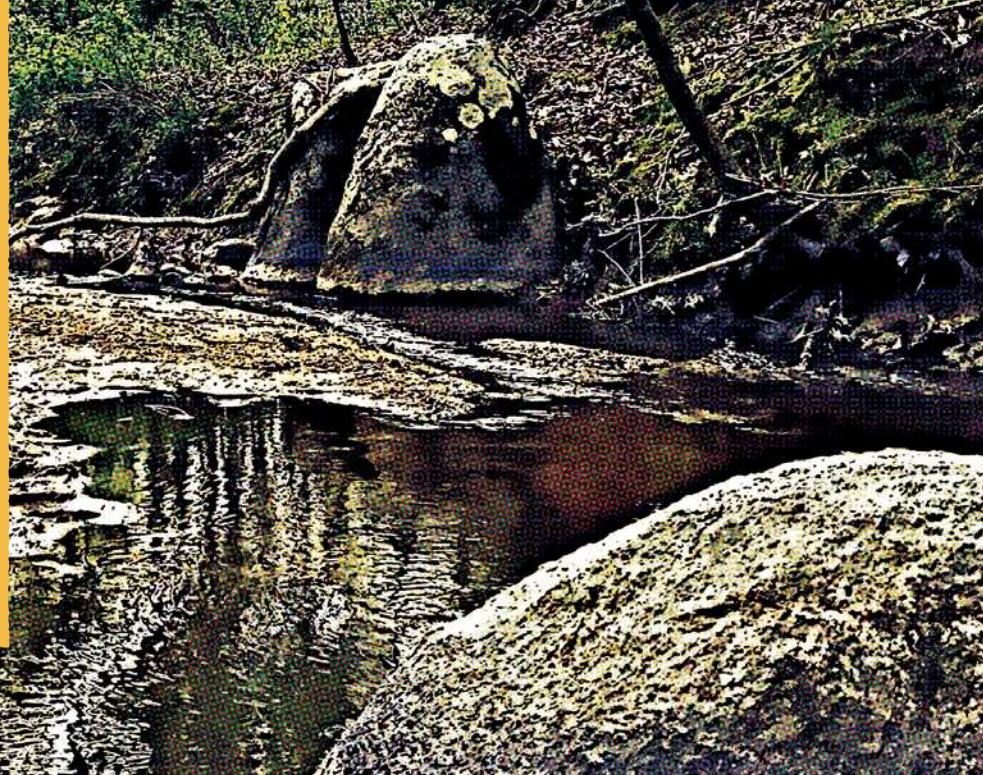
- ECONOMIC RESILIENCE
- EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS
- INFRASTRUCTURE
- PUBLIC SAFETY



"CULLMAN AVE" CHARLOTTE FIRE SWIFT WATER RESCUE TEAM GOING DOOR TO DOOR HELPING RESIDENTS ON CULLMAN AVE. DURING FLASH FLOODING IN SEPTEMBER 2008. THIS BUILDING WAS RECENTLY PURCHASED BY THE COUNTY AND WILL BE DEMOLISHED AND TURNED INTO GREENSPACE.
(PHOTO: CHARLOTTE OBSERVER)

STRATEGIES

- PREPARE FOR NATURAL DISASTERS, ECONOMIC SHIFTS OR SIGNIFICANT EVENTS.
- PLAN FOR THE FUTURE AND POPULATION GROWTH.
- ADDRESS THE CONDITIONS THAT GIVE RISE TO PUBLIC SAFETY CONCERNS.
- STRENGTHEN RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN RESIDENTS AND PUBLIC SAFETY SERVICE PROVIDERS.



Innovative approach to keeping the community safe

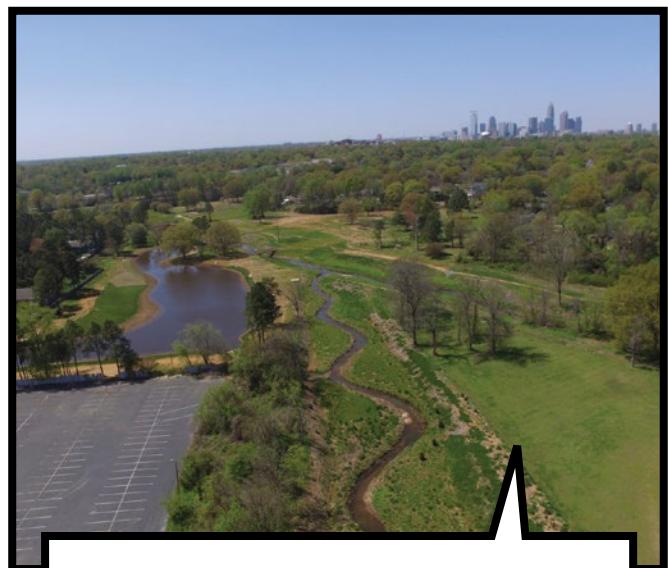
Mecklenburg County Storm Water Services

On November 12, 2020, heavy rain fell across the county causing widespread flooding, with some locations receiving as much as five inches of rain within a short period. Because of the previous removal of one nearby flood-prone building by the Mecklenburg County Storm Water Services Floodplain Buyout Program, the county avoided losses of nearly \$10 million during this flood.

The Mecklenburg County Storm Water Services Floodplain Buyout Program aims to keep residents safe, increase recreational opportunities in the community and protect the environment. County officials have made flood mitigation a priority as flash flooding is the costliest natural disaster in Mecklenburg County.

Benefits of the Floodplain Buyout Program include:

- Families are removed from danger and relocated to a safer place
- The natural floodplain is restored, and thousands of trees are planted
- Recreational opportunities, such as greenways, are enhanced
- Water quality is improved, which benefits the ecosystem



"CHANTILLY ECOLOGICAL SANCTUARY" STORM WATER SERVICES USED THE BUYOUT PROGRAM TO PURCHASE 350 APARTMENT UNITS FROM ONE OF THE MOST FLOOD-PRONE AREAS IN THE COUNTY. THE SANCTUARY IS NOW USED BY CHANTILLY MONTESSORI SCHOOL FOR AN OUTDOOR EDUCATIONAL CLASSROOM AND A GREENWAY IS PLANNED.

GUIDING PRINCIPLE SECURE

STRIVE TO ENHANCE SAFETY AND CREATE A MORE PREPARED COMMUNITY THAT CAN EASILY RECOVER FROM NATURAL DISASTERS, SIGNIFICANT EVENTS OR EMERGENCIES.

AREA OF FOCUS:

- ECONOMIC RESILIENCE
- EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS
- INFRASTRUCTURE
- PUBLIC SAFETY

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This program is nationally recognized for its innovative approach of removing residents and structures from harm's way and damage before the next flood occurs. The Rockefeller Foundation Climate Resilience Initiative recently recognized the program in an article at **US Climate Resilience Map** (onebillionresilient.org).

As part of the program, Mecklenburg County Storm Water Services assesses the risk of every property and ranks it according to its flood threat. Properties with higher risk may be eligible for a buyout if all other mitigation efforts are deemed non-feasible. Other mitigation options include wet/dry floodproofing, relocation or elevation. Once a property qualifies for a buyout, there is an appraisal of the property, and an offer is presented. The program is voluntary, and the owner is not obligated to sell. However, over the last 20 plus years of Storm Water's Buyout Program, approximately 85% of owners who go through the appraisal process participate in the buyout.

Mecklenburg Storm Water Services is passionate about continuing its work improving the security of the environment and enhancing safety to create a more prepared community. The program's value will continue to grow for the community as it deals with future flooding, climate change and development.

STRATEGIES

- PREPARE FOR NATURAL DISASTERS, ECONOMIC SHIFTS OR SIGNIFICANT EVENTS.
- PLAN FOR THE FUTURE AND POPULATION GROWTH.
- ADDRESS THE CONDITIONS THAT GIVE RISE TO PUBLIC SAFETY CONCERNs.
- STRENGTHEN RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN RESIDENTS AND PUBLIC SAFETY SERVICE PROVIDERS.



**"WESTFIELD BEFORE/
WESTFIELD AFTER"**
THESE PHOTOS SHOW FLOODING
INUNDATING THE WESTFIELD
NEIGHBORHOOD AND THEN THE
SAME LOCATION AFTER HOUSES
WERE REMOVED THROUGH THE
BUYOUT PROGRAM. THE CREATED
GREENWAY THROUGH THE
NEIGHBORHOOD IS A CRUCIAL
SECTION CONNECTING
UPTOWN CHARLOTTE TO THE
SOUTH CAROLINA STATE LINE.

GUIDING PRINCIPLE

ACCESSIBLE

FACILITATE AND ENHANCE
EQUITABLE ACCESS TO PUBLIC
AMENITIES, SERVICES AND
INFORMATION.

AREA OF FOCUS:

- PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION
- ROADS/PATHWAYS
- INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY



STRATEGIES

- IMPROVE PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION SERVICES TO IMPROVE PHYSICAL AND ECONOMIC MOBILITY ACROSS AND WITHIN THE COMMUNITY.
- BE ACCESSIBLE TO ALL GENERATIONS AND ABILITIES.
- SUPPORT EASE OF NAVIGATING THE COMMUNITY - WALKING, BIKING AND DRIVING.
- INCREASE ACCESS TO WI-FI AND TECHNOLOGY.
- IMPROVE UNDERSTANDING OF PUBLIC SERVICES AND HOW TO EFFECTIVELY ACCESS THEM.



Novant Health partners with the community

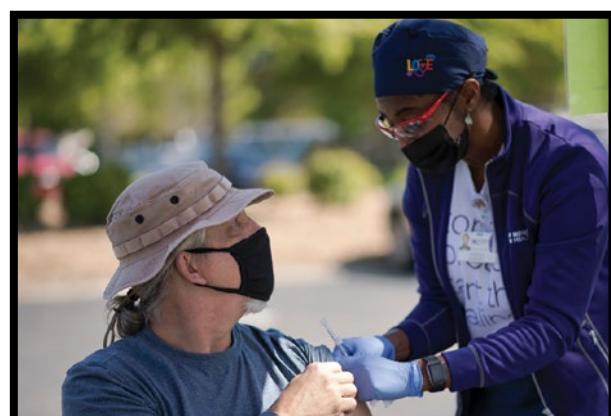
Novant Health

In 2021, to improve the health of North Carolinians during the global COVID-19 pandemic, Novant Health leaned on long-standing, dedicated community partnerships with a continued focus on addressing disparities and gaps in access to care around Mecklenburg County.

Working alongside trusted partners, including Friendship Missionary Baptist Church, the Hindu Center, Compare Foods and Our Lady of Guadalupe, Novant Health converted the COVID-19 pandemic's challenges and uncertainties into direct solutions. Together, the partners provided critical help and access to COVID-19 vaccines and boosters to those who live and work in our communities that have historically been underserved and lack access to resources.

The Novant Health Community Engagement team leveraged relationships with these key trusted community partners in priority areas where vaccination rates were low to set up mobile pop-up vaccine clinics. In doing so, Novant Health was able to provide education about the pandemic and deliver almost 6,500 doses of the COVID-19 vaccine at 68 mobile vaccine clinics.

These actions, as well as many others, are intentional. Novant Health is committed to delivering the type of care that meets people in the moment, the kind of remarkable care people require and deserve. To meet this goal, Novant Health has identified four target priority areas where it will invest and focus on building and expanding upon connections with community partners: **providing access to care, food, housing, and workforce training and development**. These priorities will help shape Novant Health's future efforts to improve the health and upward mobility of our communities, one person at a time.



GUIDING PRINCIPLE

EDUCATED

STRENGTHEN EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES, PROGRAMS AND SYSTEMS TO UNLEASH INDIVIDUAL POTENTIAL, CLOSE ACHIEVEMENT GAPS AND ENHANCE TALENT READINESS.

AREA OF FOCUS:
• SKILLED WORKFORCE
• ARTS & CULTURE



Communities
In Schools.®

Charlotte-Mecklenburg



STRATEGIES

- FOSTER A CULTURE OF LIFE-LONG LEARNING.
- INCREASE ACCESS TO ARTS, SCIENCE AND HISTORY EDUCATION.
- EXPAND AND ENHANCE LEARNING ACROSS ALL AGE GROUPS.
- DEVELOP COMMUNITY LEADERS FOR THE FUTURE.



Preparing students for a bright future

Communities In Schools

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a devastating effect on education, especially for vulnerable students. Due to school closures, instructional interruption and remote learning, millions of children have fallen behind academically and have suffered developmental delays and social-emotional trauma. An estimated 3 million students are "missing" from school rosters nationwide.

Communities In Schools of Charlotte-Mecklenburg, Inc. (CIS-Charlotte) is an affiliate of the national Communities In Schools network, the nation's leading organization dedicated to keeping kids in school and on the path to graduation. Since 1985, CIS-Charlotte has led the charge to keep kids in school so they can enjoy a brighter future. CIS-Charlotte works to ensure that all students, regardless of race, zip code, or socioeconomic background, have what they need to build on their strengths and realize their greatest potential. Advocating for students and ensuring that all students have equitable educational experiences is foundational to the mission and infused in everything this organization does. To that end, CIS-Charlotte provides case-

management services to approximately 5,000 students in grades K-12 each year in 54 Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools (CMS). Nearly 80% of CIS-Charlotte students live in households earning less than \$35,000 a year.

CIS-Charlotte's current priority is helping students re-engage in their education and recover from losses suffered as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

"At the onset of the pandemic, we had to pivot quickly from our typical services, as many organizations did," said Men Tchaas Ari, CIS-Charlotte's President and CEO. "Our initial response was to meet the urgent basic needs of our families, such as food and hygiene supplies. During the first eight weeks at the start of the pandemic, we conducted emergency needs assessments for 6,000-plus students and families and worked with CMS and the county to deliver more than 55,000 services, primarily critical needs such as meals and supplies."

Historically, CIS-Charlotte serves the very students hit hardest by the pandemic, with

GUIDING PRINCIPLE EDUCATED

STRENGTHEN EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES, PROGRAMS AND SYSTEMS TO UNLEASH INDIVIDUAL POTENTIAL, CLOSE ACHIEVEMENT GAPS AND ENHANCE TALENT READINESS.

AREA OF FOCUS:

- SKILLED WORKFORCE
- ARTS & CULTURE



Communities In Schools (cont'd.)

90% identifying as Black or Latinx, and 93% living in households at or below 200% of the Federal Poverty level. The pandemic has both illuminated and magnified the persistent disparities that already existed within our community. Students who have returned to school are struggling to adjust and recover from both learning loss and social-emotional deficits and trauma.

"A focus on technology and support for remote learning came next, helping students and parents to log in and navigate classes virtually," said Ari. Just as crucial, CIS-Charlotte staff increased home visits and mental-health check-ins for students, along with support or referrals for basic needs like utilities or housing assistance.

After a very challenging 22 months, CIS-Charlotte's number one priority is to now re-engage students in their education and help them get back on track, academically and developmentally. The organization is quickly expanding focus to not only support the nearly 5,000 students already served but also to locate and reengage thousands of students who have stopped attending school altogether. CIS-Charlotte has worked with the national CIS office to equip staff with tools and strategies for

STRATEGIES

- FOSTER A CULTURE OF LIFE-LONG LEARNING.
- INCREASE ACCESS TO ARTS, SCIENCE AND HISTORY EDUCATION.
- EXPAND AND ENHANCE LEARNING ACROSS ALL AGE GROUPS.
- DEVELOP COMMUNITY LEADERS FOR THE FUTURE.



reengagement, including deepened family support and social-emotional learning assessments and support. Site Coordinators have intensified efforts to identify and enroll students who are attending school but are struggling to readjust and are detached from learning. Once these students are enrolled, CIS-Charlotte connects them to support, resources and relationships to meet their critical needs and refocus on their education.

In October 2021, CIS-Charlotte added three new Reengagement Specialists who are working to canvas the community for high school students who are missing from enrollment rosters. Once the students are located, staff works to address the critical barriers keeping them from returning to school and helps formulate a plan to continue their education. CIS-Charlotte is currently partnering with Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools to scale this initial effort and take it district-wide.

"We anticipate the size and scope of the need, and this initiative, will be greater than anything our organization has experienced in our 37-year history, but we are committed to this next generation of kids and to ensuring they are not left behind," said Ari. "They deserve to have all the tools and resources

they need to be successful and achieve their potential."

To learn more about CIS-Charlotte and how you or your organization can get involved and support its work, visit www.cischarlotte.org.



GUIDING PRINCIPLE

INNOVATIVE

LEVERAGE DIVERSITY OF
THOUGHT, IDEAS, TALENTS,
ABILITIES AND RESOURCES
TO CREATE A THRIVING
COMMUNITY.

AREA OF FOCUS:

- CREATIVITY
- TECHNOLOGY
- ENTREPRENEURSHIP

SCAN THIS CODE TO
WATCH THE VIDEO!



OutTeach

Go Outside Expectations



STRATEGIES

- SUPPORT NEW TECHNOLOGY SOLUTIONS.
- MAKE IT EASIER FOR NEW BUSINESSES TO SUCCEED AND EXISTING BUSINESSES TO FLOURISH.
- MANAGE THE REGULATORY ENVIRONMENT TO REVITALIZE COMMUNITY CHARACTER AND PRESERVE THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT WHILE ALLOWING FOR GROWTH AND INNOVATION.



Want to help accelerate learning for kids? There's a solution right outside the classroom door.

Out Teach

Hands-on outdoor learning is proven to accelerate student comprehension, improve long-term recall and increase engagement. Out Teach helps give teachers the tools to create an experiential outdoor learning curriculum to give students real-world science experiences, weaving critical STEM, literacy, math and 21st Century skills into every school day.

Out Teach partnered with 10 Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools (CMS) Title I Elementary Schools during the 2020-2021 academic year to empower teachers to use the outdoors to inspire students of all backgrounds through hands-on learning. This opportunity is particularly important for students who have historically faced systemic barriers to achievement. Essential to Out Teach's work is the continued partnership with Mecklenburg County Public Health, which provides resources and liaison engagement to support and implement a prevention strategy focusing on those populations disproportionately affected by chronic diseases. The focus is to

advance academics, health and sustainability at Title I Elementary Schools. This is accomplished by serving as a central resource for school gardens and outdoor learning.

Out Teach aspires to build additional outdoor learning spaces at other high-needs elementary schools in the future to spark students' love of learning and inspire exploration. To support this goal, Out Teach is aligned with the 2040 Plan and Mecklenburg County Parks and Recreation Playbook and its strategy to increase quality outdoor spaces within a 10-minute walk from residents' homes. This plan encourages parental and community engagement, both of which are high priorities for Out Teach school partners.

For more information on Out Teach's work to provide the support and tools to engage all children in learning opportunities that put them on a path to success in school and life, visit www.out-teach.org.

GUIDING PRINCIPLE

ENJOYABLE

ENHANCE THE
COMMUNITY THROUGH
EXPERIENCES.

AREA OF FOCUS:

- ENTERTAINMENT
- DESTINATIONS
- FESTIVALS & EVENTS
- SPORTS & LEISURE



STRATEGIES

- EXPAND OPTIONS (INDOOR AND OUTDOOR) TO PARTICIPATE IN THE ARTS, RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES, SPORTS, PARKS AND CULTURAL EVENTS.
- WELCOME AND PROMOTE CULTURALLY DIVERSE CULINARY ARTS.
- ENCOURAGE OPPORTUNITIES FOR RESIDENTS TO BE ENTERTAINED.
- ENCOURAGE DESTINATION RECREATION OPPORTUNITIES.



Eastway Regional Recreation Center

Mecklenburg County Parks & Recreation

Access to natural resources and outdoor experience programming has historically occurred on the outer reaches of the county, where larger nature preserves and nature centers reside.

However, less than four miles northeast of Center City is an oasis known as **Eastway Regional Recreation Center**. Eastway exemplifies the Livable Meck strategy, "Expand options (indoor and outdoor) to participate in the arts, recreational activities, sports, parks and cultural events."

Tucked between strip malls, light industrial and multi-family housing units, sits 90 acres of active and passive parkland with over 90,000 square feet of indoor recreational amenities. Eastway's conception is thanks to community grassroots efforts, support from local elected leaders, and funding via a county bond referendum.

After years of neighborhood advocacy and collaboration between neighbors and county leadership, residents are now enjoying a first-of-its-kind recreation experience bringing

aquatics, senior services, nature, fitness and more together.

Diversity and equity are imperative, including serving historically underserved populations. The neighborhoods surrounding Eastway represent a variety of ages, races, nations and interests. Eastway provides a place to build lasting connections and relationships that characterize a welcoming and connected community where everyone is valued.



GUIDING PRINCIPLE

ENJOYABLE

ENHANCE THE
COMMUNITY THROUGH
EXPERIENCES.

AREA OF FOCUS:

- ENTERTAINMENT
- DESTINATIONS
- FESTIVALS & EVENTS
- SPORTS & LEISURE



Mecklenburg County Parks & Recreation (cont'd.)

Eastway showcases both outdoor and indoor features. Outdoor features include local fauna and flora thriving in undeveloped parkland surrounding the new facility and creating a beautiful environment for stewardship and conservation programming.

Indoor features include aquatics, a nature center, fitness studios, gymnasiums, an event hall and programming for all ages. Hosting the department's full-time Environmental Educator located closest to the city, Eastway is able to provide enhanced urban access to outdoor programming. All of these attributes headline a truly inclusive and comprehensive park and recreation experience.

Access is key to Eastway now and in the future. Studies including neighborhood walk times, rail and bus public transportation, and traditional vehicle access shaped how Eastway was designed and is operated. In 2021, the Board of Commissioners approved using American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds to build a pedestrian footbridge to Eastway which will further expand public access to this facility and its programs.

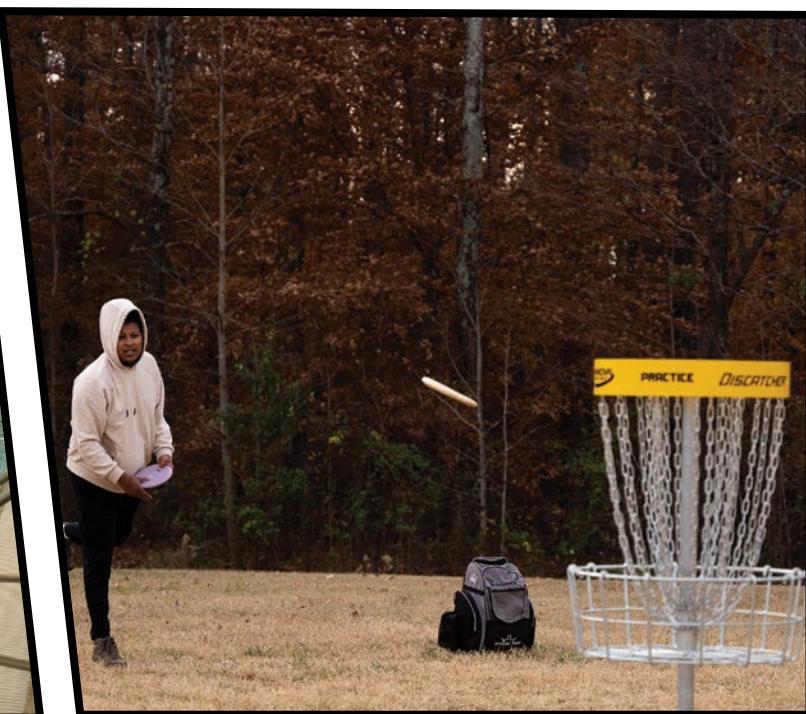
STRATEGIES

- EXPAND OPTIONS (INDOOR AND OUTDOOR) TO PARTICIPATE IN THE ARTS, RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES, SPORTS, PARKS AND CULTURAL EVENTS.
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- ENCOURAGE OPPORTUNITIES FOR RESIDENTS TO BE ENTERTAINED.
- ENCOURAGE DESTINATION RECREATION OPPORTUNITIES.



Natural resources and recreation enhance the quality of life in our community. Eastway is a special accomplishment for 2021 that will be enjoyed for generations.

For more information about Eastway, visit www.MeckNC.gov/parkandrec.



GUIDING PRINCIPLE **TOGETHER**

BUILD LASTING
CONNECTIONS AND
RELATIONSHIPS THAT
CHARACTERIZE A WELCOMING,
CONNECTED AND VALUED
COMMUNITY.

AREA OF FOCUS:

- HOSPITALITY
- DIVERSITY
- SOCIAL CAPITAL

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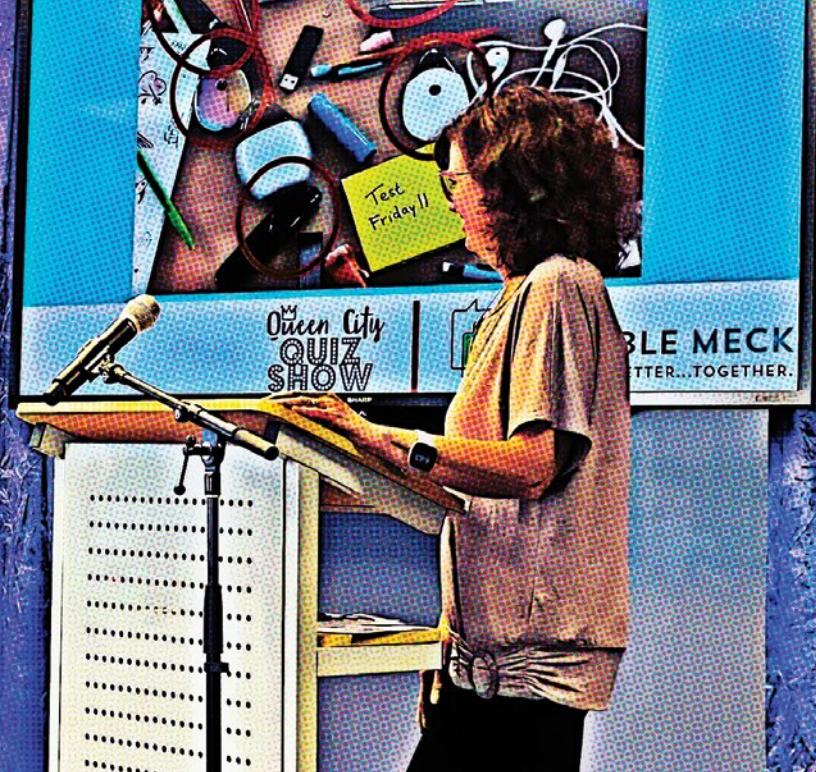
MECKLENBURG COUNTY
North Carolina

Public Health



STRATEGIES

- WELCOME NEW PEOPLE, IDEAS AND OPPORTUNITIES.
- BRING PEOPLE TOGETHER VIA INFORMATION AND EVENTS.
- CREATE AN ENVIRONMENT SAFE FOR DIVERSITY OF THOUGHT AND CREATIVE CONFLICT.
- CELEBRATE AND INTEGRATE HISTORY, CULTURE AND DIVERSITY.



Virtual event addresses public health issue

Mecklenburg County Public Health

Vaping negatively affects adolescent brain development and has negative physical and mental health consequences. According to the National Institutes of Health, while youth vaping rates have plateaued in recent years, the number of teens vaping remains concerning. For example, nationally, 31% of high school sophomores reported vaping in the past 12 months.

To address this public health issue, Mecklenburg County Public Health (MCPH) and Livable Meck collaborated on an innovative concept to raise awareness around vaping prevention. The goal was to provide a creative community engagement opportunity to educate adults around concerns with youth vaping and provide tips to communicate with youth in a meaningful, nonjudgmental way.

By partnering with Charlotte is Creative's Queen City Quiz Show, an organization that inspires and educates the community using quiz-themed events, the *Ways to Talk to Youth About Vaping* infotainment event was born. Six local influencers/celebrities were recruited to be game show panelists. The Tobacco Control Team at MCPH provided credible, factual, best

practice health information and tips driven by four diverse focus groups conducted to gather youth perspectives on effective communication strategies.

In support of this initiative, several communication tools were created including a focus group analysis report with anonymous youth quotes, an infographic/printable brochure listing top strategies to effectively communicate with youth, and short video clips for social media sharing.

The content was brought to life on October 26, 2021, through a high-energy quiz show with a series of games and "till the soil" moments all broadcast through Facebook Live with American Sign Language (ASL) translation and opportunities for audience interaction through Mentimeter, an interactive presentation tool.

This virtual event reached 638 households and represents an innovative example of collaboration among county departments that shape the way the county communicates future initiatives using educational, creative and compelling content for maximum impact.

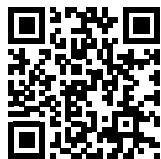
GUIDING PRINCIPLE **TOGETHER**

BUILD LASTING CONNECTIONS AND RELATIONSHIPS THAT CHARACTERIZE A WELCOMING, CONNECTED AND VALUED COMMUNITY.

AREA OF FOCUS:

- HOSPITALITY
- DIVERSITY
- SOCIAL CAPITAL

SCAN THIS CODE TO WATCH THE VIDEO!



BEST BUDDIES®



STRATEGIES

- WELCOME NEW PEOPLE, IDEAS AND OPPORTUNITIES.
- BRING PEOPLE TOGETHER VIA INFORMATION AND EVENTS.
- CREATE AN ENVIRONMENT SAFE FOR DIVERSITY OF THOUGHT AND CREATIVE CONFLICT.
- CELEBRATE AND INTEGRATE HISTORY, CULTURE AND DIVERSITY.



Forming meaningful one-to-one friendships

Best Buddies

Best Buddies Citizens chapters provide companies or community groups the opportunity to get involved by forming friendships with their peers with intellectual or developmental disabilities (IDD). To support this mission, Best Buddies launched the Best Buddies Citizens adult friendship program in North Carolina in 2020.

By matching volunteers with and without IDD in friendships, hosting engaging community events and creating matches at workplaces, the Best Buddies Citizens program strives to create an inclusive and diverse community for all. These friendships are made based on age, location and common interests.

Best Buddies' first Mecklenburg community Citizens pair, Maddie and Emma, celebrated their one-year "friend-a-versary" on December 10, 2021.

"Emma and I were matched about a year ago and our friendship has grown in ways I didn't know were possible," said Best Buddies Citizen member Maddie. "Emma and I started with a lot of FaceTime calls and trips to the movie theatre,

and since then we have been able to experience so many incredible things together. We have tried dozens of new restaurants, shopped until we dropped, went to a fashion show, trick or treated, got to film as extras in a movie and our most recent adventure was going to a concert together where we sat front row and were able to meet Emma's favorite artists, Home Free!"

"The fun never stops with Emma," Maddie continued. "Our friendship has gone from doing things we like together, to liking everything we do, as long as we are together. She radiates joy and light wherever she goes, and I simply could not ask for a more pure and authentic friendship. I am so thankful for Best Buddies for introducing us. I have made a lifelong friend, and I am so excited to see what other shenanigans we get into in the years to come!"

Friendship matches talk at least once a week and meet up at least twice a month, and matches are made for a full year. The application process includes an online application, background check and phone/video interview. To learn more, contact izzititz@bestbuddies.org.

QUALITY OF LIFE



While [The Livable Meck Plan](#) uses guiding principles and strategies to navigate our community's growth, it also leverages data to identify and measure quality of life issues, relevant trends and outcomes. Livable Meck uses a variety of data sources, but the primary source of information is the [Quality of Life Explorer](#).

In 2021, updates to the functionality and features of the Quality of Life Explorer were made, which residents are invited to explore. The Quality of Life Explorer presents the social, housing, economic, environmental and safety data in Charlotte and Mecklenburg County.

Residents, businesses, service providers, government agencies, realtors, universities and others can use this

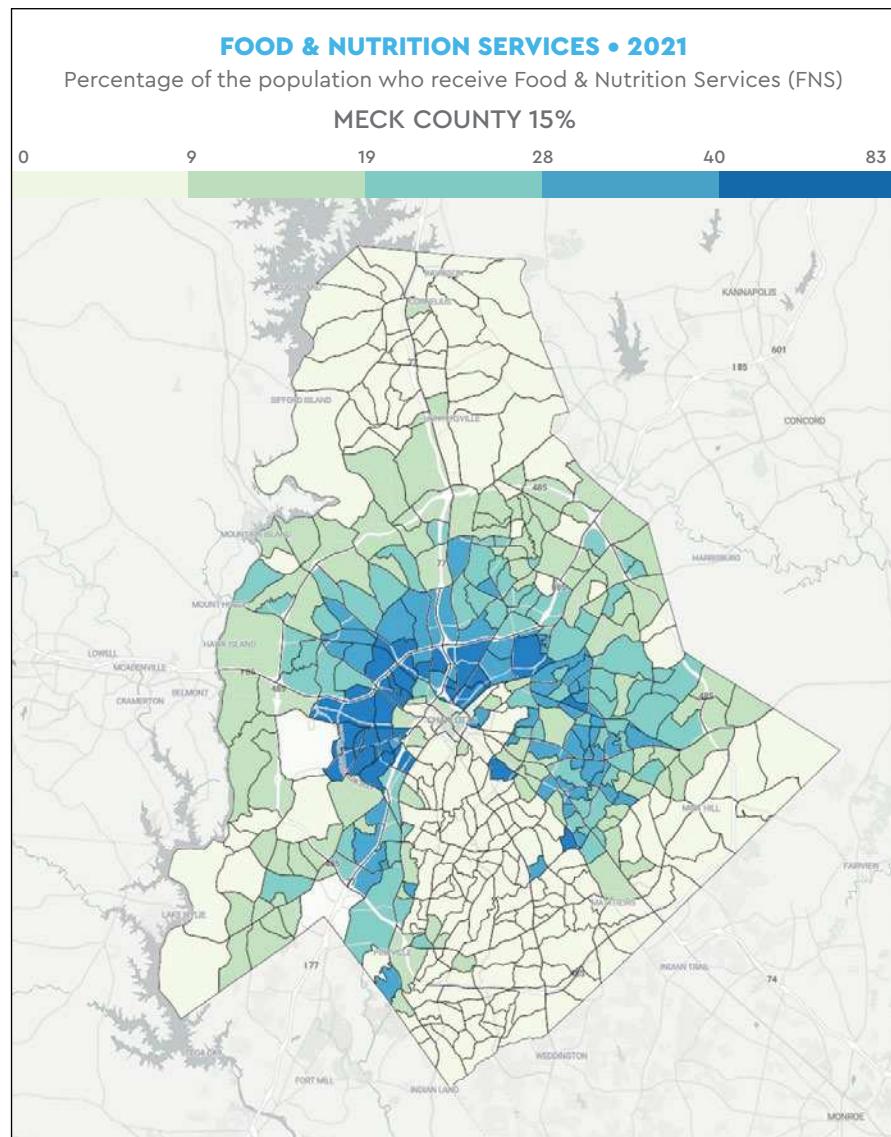
tool to learn more about the county and its neighborhoods, to develop programs and services and to plan.

The Quality of Life Explorer was created in partnership with the City of Charlotte, Mecklenburg County, the University of North Carolina Charlotte Urban Institute, and with the towns of Cornelius, Davidson, Huntersville, Matthews, Mint Hill and Pineville.

Livable Meck also uses other indicators to influence efforts across the community. Information used for the 2021 Progress Report included data from the Mecklenburg County Pulse Report, Feeding America and the U.S. Census. Partners are encouraged to use these sources to consider their priorities, operations for the future and opportunities to collaborate.

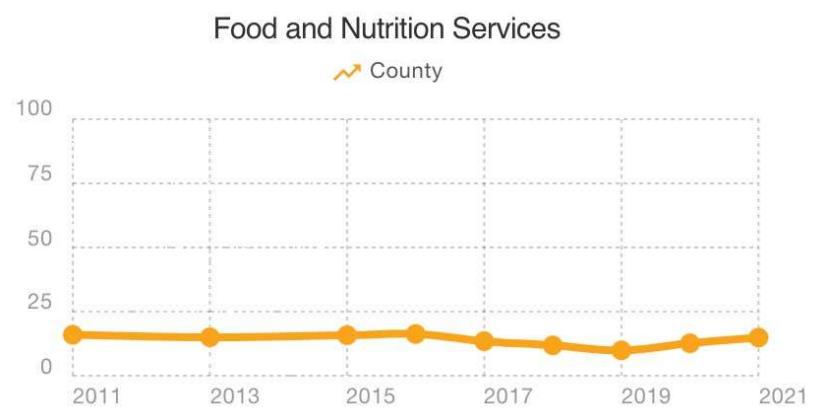
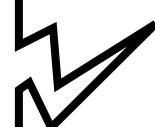
Food & Nutrition Services

The Food and Nutrition Services (FNS) program was established to end hunger and improve the health of low-income residents by helping families purchase the food they need for a nutritionally adequate diet. Benefits can be redeemed at most grocery stores and many farmers' markets, allowing for the purchase of nutritious food while freeing up funds for other critical needs such as housing, transportation and health care. Identifying communities with high FNS percentages is useful for service providers and neighborhoods who want to know where low-income families are located.



WHAT TO WATCH...

CHANGE IN PERCENTAGE
OF THE POPULATION
WHO RECEIVE FOOD AND
NUTRITION SERVICES
(FNS) WAS 15% IN 2021,
AN INCREASE OF 5%
SINCE 2019.



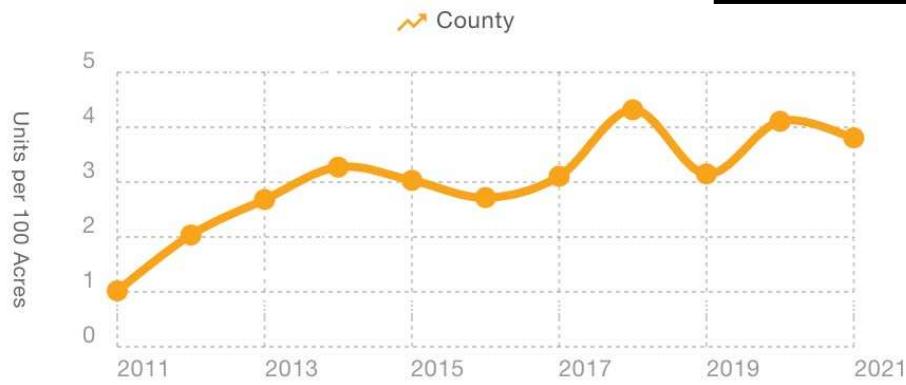
QUALITY OF LIFE

Residential New Construction

Residential new construction single or multi-family can be built on previously undeveloped land, as infill on vacant urban lots, or as replacement housing where other structures have been demolished. New construction activity available on the Quality of Life tool indicates how and where people choose to live and may be impacted by a broad variety of factors including housing market trends, household size and income, construction lending standards, the availability of developable land, age and condition of available housing stock, and neighborhood amenities. New residential construction generally increases population and housing density, and in established neighborhoods, an increase in new construction may also impact housing affordability, particularly for renters or households with fixed incomes.

WHAT TO WATCH... GROWTH IN NEW CONSTRUCTION IS UP 60% SINCE 2016 AND RESIDENTIAL PERMITS CONTINUE ON AN UPWARD TREND. AS THE POPULATION AND NUMBER OF HOUSEHOLDS IN MECKLENBURG COUNTY CONTINUE TO GROW, SO TOO WILL THE NEED FOR NEW HOUSING UNITS. ACCORDING TO A 2021 REPORT BY THE [JOINT CENTER FOR HOUSING STUDIES](#), SINGLE-FAMILY HOUSING STARTS ARE UP BY 13.2% WHICH ILLUSTRATES A MIX OF GENTRIFICATION, CLOSE-IN NEIGHBORHOODS AND CONTINUING SUBURBAN BUILDING.

Residential New Construction



Environmental Protection

The Mecklenburg Board adopted the Mecklenburg County Environmental Leadership Policy in 2021, which builds upon the 2004 version. This comprehensive plan is organized into four sections: **Facilities and Fleet, Natural Environment, Operations and Policies, and Partnerships.** The Policy and associated Action Plan commits county government to operate in a manner that protects our natural resources, act as a model of environmental stewardship and

use county resources wisely for the benefit of its citizens. Since the Plan's adoption in March 2021, the county has treated over 70 acres for invasive species, evaluated and refined our land acquisition efforts, and begun working on an environmental justice action plan, amongst other impactful work. For additional updates about the Policy and associated Action Plan, please visit MeckNC.gov.



